DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 426 542 EC 306 978

TITLE	Involvement of General Education Teachers in the IEP Process. QTA Forum: A Brief Analysis of Critical Issues in Special Education.
INSTITUTION	National Association of State Directors of Special Education, Alexandria, VA.
SPONS AGENCY	Department of Education, Washington, DC.
PUB DATE	1998-12-00
NOTE	8p.
CONTRACT	H159K70002
AVAILABLE FROM	Project FORUM staff: Tel: 703-519-3800 (voice) or 703-519-7008 (TDD).
PUB TYPE	Reports - Research (143)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	Curriculum Development; *Disabilities; Educational Legislation; Elementary Secondary Education; Federal Legislation; *Individualized Education Programs; National Surveys; Objectives; *Regular and Special Education Relationship; Standards; State Surveys; Teacher Collaboration; *Teacher Participation; Teamwork; Training
IDENTIFIERS	*Individuals with Disabilities Educ Act Amend 1997

ABSTRACT

This report analyzes information received from 37 states and non-state jurisdictions related to the new provision in the 1997 Amendments to the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) that requires participation of general education teachers in the Individualized Education Program (IEP) process. Analysis indicates: (1) 15 of the states reported that general education participation in the IEP process is not new and that general education participation in the IEP process is a statutory and/or regulatory requirement; (2) respondents indicated support for the new IDEA requirement of involving the general education teacher in the IEP process, however, the logistics of such involvements are a significant challenge; (3) 12 of the 37 respondents commented on resource implications for supporting the participation of general education teachers in the IEP meetings, including the need to hold IEP meetings after school or in the evenings, to hire substitute teachers to cover for general education teachers, and for school-level administrative support for general education involvement in the IEP process; and (4) the need for professional development of both general and special education teachers in collaboration, co-teaching, linkage of IEP goals with standards, and the role of special education in enhancing access to the general curriculum. (CR)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED 426 542

Quick Turn Around Forum: Issue: Involvement of General Education Teachers in the IEP Process.

December, 1998

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)
✓ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.
• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

EC 306978

Quick Turn Around Forum

QTA- a brief analysis of a critical issue in special education

Issue: Involvement of General Education Teachers in the IEP Process

Date: December, 1998

Purpose of this QTA

This QTA is a brief analysis of information received from 37 states and non-state jurisdictions related to the new provision in the 1997 Amendments to the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA '97) that requires participation of general education teachers in the individualized education program (IEP) process.

Background

In the past, federal regulations for IDEA have required participation of a teacher in the IEP process [Section 601(a)]. Federal regulations, however, have been silent regarding whether the required IEP teacher should be a general or special teacher. Thus, there has not been an explicit requirement that a general education teacher be a member of the IEP team. However, IDEA '97 specifically requires participation by the general education teacher in the IEP process. This requirement reflects the intent of Congress, as stated in both the Senate and House Committee Reports, that all students with disabilities should have access to the general curriculum.

Survey of States and Non-state Jurisdictions

As part of Project FORUM's work on its cooperative agreement with the U.S. Department of Education's Office for Special Education Programs (OSEP), all states and non-state jurisdictions were surveyed during July and August, 1998 regarding:

- Issues and challenges in implementing general education teacher participation in the IEP process; and
- State Education Agency (SEA) policies and procedures to implement IDEA changes related to general education participation in the IEP process.

In addition, telephone interviews were conducted with 19 SEAs to gather supplemental information regarding the participation of general education teachers involved in the IEP process.

Information was received from a total of 37 states and non-state jurisdictions (hereafter referred to as states in this document). Analysis revealed four policy and implementation issues.

Issue #1: Overall Implementation of the New IDEA Requirement

Thirteen of the 37 states responding to the survey indicated that general education participation in the IEP process is not new (CO, IL, KS, KY, MA, MI, MN, MT, ND, NH, NJ, VT, WY). Rather, general education participation in the IEP process is a statutory

This document is available in alternative formats. For details, please contact Project FORUM staff at 703-519-3800 (voice) or 7008 (TDD)

EC 306978

and/or regulatory requirement. In addition, two states (WI & WV) reported recent statutory changes that require general education participation in the IEP process. Twenty-one (21) of the states reported not having a policy requirement to involve general education teachers in the IEP process prior to IDEA '97. This information is summarized in Table 1.

Table 1
General Education Participation in the IEP Process

Response	Number
State Requirement Prior to IDEA '97	13
Not a State Requirement Prior to IDEA '97	21
Recent State Law Change	2
No Response	1
Total Respondents	37

Of those states that did not previously require general education teacher participation in the IEP process, four (IN, MD, SC, CA) indicated that a number of school districts have already implemented practice consistent with IDEA '97. For example, Florida's *Quality Indicators*, developed two years ago, strongly suggest general education participation in the IEP process.

In American Samoa, general education teachers are currently required to be present at meetings in which new IEPs are being developed. Also, team teaching and coordinated planning are emphasized in kindergarten through third grade using the standard curriculum.

Five (5) respondents (AL, MO, NC, OR, TN) indicated that their states are in the process of developing parameters and training for new IDEA requirements, and are not yet ready to share information with other states.

Issue #2: Logistics of Involving the General Education Teacher

Maximizing Student Contact Time

Survey respondents indicated support for the new IDEA requirement of involving the general education teacher in the IEP process; however, the logistics of such involvement are a significant challenge. With the focus on high expectations and improved academic achievement for students, respondents expressed concern that time spent participating in IEP meetings could result in reduced student-teacher time.

The Virginia respondent summarized this policy dilemma succinctly by stating that, in order to have effective IEP linkages with the general curriculum, the general education teacher must be a key player in IEP development and implementation. This requirement is seen as difficult to implement without taking away from student contact time for special and general education students. A practical solution, such as assigning one general education teacher per week to attend all IEP meetings, is not sufficient to carry out this general/special education relationship in a meaningful way. Increased complaints or concerns by staff and/or parents might result while school districts are trying to figure out how to re-arrange schedules and calendars to meet the general education participation requirement.

The Florida respondent indicated that the departmental policy is to avoid creating state requirements that result in removing teachers from their classrooms. Therefore, IEP

meetings are often held during the general education teacher's planning time. The Connecticut and Massachusetts respondents also identified classroom coverage as a critical implementation challenge.

In Louisiana, many general education teachers are already overwhelmed by broad reform changes and are reluctant to take on additional responsibilities. Both the Louisiana and Idaho respondents indicated that some general education teachers do not feel prepared to participate fully in IEP development and implementation. Strategies will be needed to achieve "buy-in" on the part of general education teachers.

Role of General Education Teachers

In Massachusetts and North Dakota, involvement of the general education teacher as a member of the IEP team was a matter of policy and practice prior to IDEA '97. The experiences of these two states indicate that successful collaboration and communication strategies among parents, special education teachers, and general education teachers are even more critical than the actual presence of the general education teacher at all IEP meetings. The Florida SEA respondent also noted that general education participation should not be limited to IEP meetings. Rather, general education and special education teachers should be engaged in active, ongoing collaboration in the planning, implementation, and evaluation of the IEP and its linkages with the general curriculum.

Type of General Education Participant

Optional considerations are needed at the secondary level because students with disabilities have several general education teachers. Questions arise such as: How many general education teachers should be involved in the IEP team meetings? Respondents indicated that the guidance counselor or department head may be in the best position to gather information from all of the student's teachers in advance of the IEP meeting and to represent all general education teacher interests. Guidance counselors are also involved in scheduling arrangements.

In accordance with state requirements in Colorado, guidance counselors have represented general education at IEP meetings. Similarly, in Indiana, guidance counselors actively participate in Case Conference (IEP) meetings at the secondary level because they have knowledge of the general curriculum and scheduling, and advise students on curriculum and course selection. One respondent suggested that high school teachers may not know as much about the demands and modifications of subjects taught by other teachers, whereas a guidance counselor can provide a broader perspective.

The New Jersey respondent suggested that a departmental chair could represent general education for middle and high school students who have several teachers. In Virginia, substitute teachers are utilized to gather input from the general education teachers prior to IEP meetings and to represent general education teachers at the IEP meetings. In Maryland, general education staff are rotated in order to facilitate IEP involvement, and floating substitutes are utilized.

The New York respondent indicated that general education participation at the preschool level is an issue that is in need of clarification. Specifically, who should be the general education teacher at this level? Should it be another preschool or kindergarten teacher, or a teacher at a private preschool without students with disabilities if the school does not have preschool for students without disabilities?

Another challenge noted by respondents is that

of identifying the appropriate general education representative for students placed in settings such as non-public schools.

Nature of Participation by the General Education Teacher

States are looking for alternative and creative options for general education teacher participation in the IEP process, and respondents from four states indicated that clarification is needed regarding what constitutes "participation" (i.e., presence or input). One respondent asked, "Can the IEP team meeting proceed when the invited general education teacher does not attend?"

Suggestions were offered by a number of respondents (CA, CT, FL, IA, MD, NJ, NY, VT, WV). For example, IEP development could be carried out in ways other than during a meeting, and physical presence at the IEP meeting may not be needed at all times, particularly at the secondary level. General education teachers could provide written or e-mail input, or meet with the special education teacher and/or the parents over the telephone. Student folders could be circulated to general education teachers in advance of IEP team meetings or case managers could assist in obtaining input.

Another suggestion was that general education teachers might be required to participate in only part of the IEP team meeting in order to facilitate scheduling and minimize time away from students (i.e., provide flexibility regarding what constitutes "reasonable involvement").

Issue #3: Resource Needs

Scheduling IEPs Beyond School Hours

Twelve of the 37 respondents commented on resource implications for supporting the participation of general education teachers in IEP meetings. Addressing this issue will most likely require union contract negotiations because of the need to hold IEP meetings at times agreeable to parents (e.g., before school, after school, evenings, and weekends). Teacher union contracts typically prescribe working hours for teachers. Additional teacher compensation will, no doubt, be an issue in several states.

Rhode Island has begun to address some of these issues by adding representatives from the two state teachers' unions to a State IEP Advisory Committee. The Florida SEA also identified the need to involve teacher unions in the implementation process, in order to support general education teacher participation at IEP meetings that may be held afterschool, evenings, and weekends.

Support for Substitute Teachers

Three state respondents (CA, MN, NJ) noted that hiring substitutes to cover for general education teachers while they participate in the IEP process is an additional expense for school systems. The New Jersey respondent identified the need to hire permanent substitutes in order to fully implement the general education participation requirement.

In Pennsylvania, each school district and school will be developing strategies to obtain general education input and will discuss the use of substitute teachers and scheduling IEP meetings after school. All of these options have resource implications.

Administrative Support and Additional Time

Another resource issue is the need for school-level administrative support for general education involvement in the IEP process.

Although not expressly required by IDEA '97,

involvement of the general education teacher goes beyond attending IEP meetings. On-going collaboration between general and special education teachers is essential in order to provide students with disabilities access to the general education curriculum. A continuing challenge will be to create additional time during the school day for general and special education teachers to meet and plan for ongoing curricular and instructional adaptations and accommodations, as well as to monitor ongoing student progress. The North Dakota respondent stated that their state experience involving general education teachers in the IEP process since 1990 indicates that lack of planning time is a persistent problem.

Other Resources

The Louisiana respondent reported that the implementation of *incidental benefits* may provide additional fiscal and resource flexibility to support increased involvement of general educators and ongoing special and general education collaboration in IEP implementation to insure IEP/general curriculum connections. The *incidental benefits* provision of IDEA allows federally-funded special education teachers to work with students with and without IEPs, as long as the needs of students with IEPs are met.

Issue #4: Professional Development Implications

Several professional development issues were identified through this brief analysis. First, as stated previously, involvement of general education teachers must be more than participation in IEP meetings. Involvement must be on-going collaboration between general and special education, for which a critical knowledge base is essential. Eight respondents indicated the need for expanded training for general and special education teachers in the following areas:

- Collaboration skills
- Co-teaching
- Linkage of IEP goals and objectives with state and district standards and benchmarks
- Role and function of special education in enhancing access to the general curriculum, including instructional and curricular adaptations to enhance student progress.

Several respondents, including Ohio and Utah, stressed that special education teachers particularly need to have professional development in the general education curriculum, standards, benchmarks, and performance-based testing. Specifically related to IEP development, respondents identified a need for training on meaningful involvement of an additional team member (general educator), and changing IEP team roles and responsibilities.

Within Kentucky, both general and special education teachers develop goals and objectives, and report on progress of the previous IEP goals and objectives. The general education teacher gives information related to instructional strategies in the classroom, especially for students with difficulties in reading or math, or for students who have limited English proficiency.

In addition to professional development for the IEP team, three respondents (AZ, NC, VA) pointed out that school principals and other administrators need more information on how they can provide support during the implementation process.

A number of states have begun to implement the professional development needed to fully involve the general education teacher in the IEP process, particularly related to changing roles and responsibilities, and linking the IEP with the general education curriculum.

Examples follow:

- California has provided training related to involvement of the general education teacher in the IEP process as part of their *IDEA Alignment* training in seven locations across the state, as well as fact sheets and information on their website.
- The Iowa SEA developed a comprehensive IEP manual and has conducted training across the state.
- The Louisiana SEA has developed a draft, *General Education Access Guide: A Tool Kit for Program Development*, which is being field tested. This document provides specific information regarding role and responsibility changes by general and special educators in assuring general education involvement in the IEP process.
- The Rhode Island SEA is developing an *IEP Resource and Technical Assistance Center* to provide IEP training in the five regions of the state.
- Minnesota is conducting staff development on this topic.
- The Arizona SEA developed a draft technical assistance manual, *Connecting Components of the Individualized Educational Program*, that includes guidance related to participation of general education in the IEP process.
- The Kansas SEA has a *Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)* document on their website and a chat room to provide assistance to school districts in the implementation of IEP changes.
- The Kentucky SEA also has an IEP *FAQ* posted on their website.

Summary

Responses from 37 SEAs were analyzed to determine policy and implementation issues related to the new IDEA requirement that general education teachers must be involved in the IEP process. Fifteen of the responding SEAs indicated that this is not a new change, but consistent with existing state requirements. Several other respondents noted that while not a current state policy requirement, many school districts are implementing this requirement in practice.

Four policy and implementation issues were discussed—overall implementation, logistics of involvement, resource needs, and professional development implications. Respondents expressed concern about taking general education teachers away from their classes in order to fully participate in the IEP process, as well as teacher contract negotiations related to time spent on IEP matters outside of the school day.

A number of solutions to the challenge of involving general education in the IEP process have been implemented by various SEAs. Examples include: use of a counselor or department head to represent general education, use of substitutes for classroom coverage during IEP team meetings, use of alternative ways to provide general education input prior to IEP meetings (e.g., telephone contact, circulation of student folders).

SEAs reported creative examples of staff development for general and special education teachers, IEP team members, and administrators to insure implementation of this new IDEA requirement.

This report was supported in whole or in part by the U.S. Department of Education (Cooperative Agreement No. H159K70002). However, the opinions expressed herein do not necessarily reflect the position or policy of the U.S. Department of Education, and no official endorsement